

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of providing access to information relating to a plurality of products using a cascading commerce menu, comprising:

providing a first level menu listing a first set of product categories;

5 detecting a position of a cursor over a first product category listed in said first set of product categories; and

providing a cascading second level menu listing a first set of product subcategories related to said first product category in response to said detection of said cursor position.

10 2. The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein said cascading menu is stored on a client computer.

3. The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein at least one of said listed first set of product categories provides a link over the Internet to a commerce site.

15 4. The method as defined in Claim 1, further comprising automatically generating a search string based on said first category and said first subcategory.

5. The method as defined in Claim 4, further comprising providing a display of a plurality of products from multiple vendors, where the plurality correspond to the search string.

20 6. The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein the cascading menu is dynamically generated from text, and where the text is stored on a client computer.

7. The method as defined in Claim 6, wherein the dynamically generated cascading menu is updated, further comprising:

receiving an indication of a version of the text stored on the client computer;

25 transmitting changes to be applied to the text stored on the client computer;

updating the text stored on the client computer using the transmitted changes; and

dynamically generating the cascading menu from the updated text.

30 8. The method as defined in Claim 1, further including ranking providers based on an aggregate price of an item available from the providers wherein the item

corresponds to the first product category and the first product subcategory, the method comprising:

- receiving a first item price for said item from a first provider;
- receiving a first additional cost associated with providing the item by  
5 said first provider to a first consumer;
- receiving a second item price for said item from a second provider;
- receiving a second additional cost associated with providing the item by  
said second provider to said first consumer; and
- ranking said first provider and said second provider based on at least said  
10 first item price, said second item price, said first additional cost, and said second  
additional cost.

9. The method as defined in Claim 8, wherein said first additional cost is a shipping cost associated with the provision of said item from said first provider, and said second additional cost is a shipping cost associated with the provision of said item  
15 from said second provider.

10. The method as defined in Claim 8, wherein said first additional cost is a tax associated with the provision of said item from said first provider, and said second additional cost is a tax associated with the provision of said item from said second  
20 provider.

11. The method as defined in Claim 8, wherein said first additional cost is an insurance cost associated with the provision of said item from said first provider, and said second additional cost is an insurance cost associated with the provision of said  
25 item from said second provider.

12. The method as defined in Claim 8, wherein an addition of said second item price and said second additional cost is lower than an addition of said first item price and said first additional cost, and where said second provider is ranked higher than  
30 said first provider.

13. The method as defined in Claim 12, further comprising receiving a bid from said first provider to lower at least one of said item price and said first additional  
cost to thereby improve the first provider's ranking.

14. A method of providing access to information relating to a plurality of products using a cascading commerce menu, comprising:

providing a first level menu including a set of high-level product categories;

detecting a customer selection of a high-level product category from said set of high-level product categories;

providing a cascading second level menu including a set of relatively narrower product categories related to said high-level product category in response to said customer selection;

detecting a customer selection of a relatively narrower product category from said set of relatively narrower product categories;

automatically generating a search request based at least in part on said customer selection of said relatively narrower product category; and

providing the customer with information on products related to said selected relatively narrower product category at least partly in response to said search request.

15. The method as defined in Claim 14, further comprising providing the customer a reward at least partly in response to using the cascading commerce menu.

16. The method as defined in Claim 15, wherein the reward is a credit.

17. The method as defined in Claim 14, further comprising providing the customer a reward in response to the customer purchasing at least one product associated with the selected relatively narrower product category.

18. The method as defined in Claim 14, further comprising providing an advertisement on at least one of said first level menu and said cascading second level menu.

19. The method as defined in Claim 14, wherein said information on products includes a ranked list of said products.

20. The method as defined in Claim 19, wherein the ranking is modified based at least in part on a bid from at least a first provider of one of said products in the

ranked list.

21. A method of providing access to information relating to a plurality of products and services and providing user rewards, comprising:

downloading cascading menus to a client computer;

detecting a customer selection of a product category on a first level menu of said cascading menus;

causing a display of a cascading second level menu including a subset of product categories within the selected product category, wherein the subset contains one or more product categories;

detecting a customer selection of a first of said subset of product categories; and

providing a reward to the customer at least partly in response to the customer's selection of said first subset of product categories.

22. The method as defined in Claim 21, further comprising causing the display of an amount of the reward associated with a selection of a first subset of product categories.

23. The method as defined in Claim 21, further comprising causing the display of the total rewards earned by the customer.

24. The method as defined in Claim 21, further comprising:

providing a referral award in response to the customer causing others to download said cascading menus; and

causing the display of the referral reward amounts earned by the customer.

25. A system that provides access to information relating to a plurality of products using a cascading commerce menu, the system comprising:

means for providing a first level menu listing a first set of product categories;

means for detecting a position of a cursor over a first product category listed in said first set of product categories; and

means for providing a cascading second level menu listing a first set of product subcategories related to said first product category in response to said detection of said cursor position.